

ESSAYS ON

POPULISM

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INTRODUCTION

With the exception of anarchism, populism has given rise to more myth-making and out and out lies than any other political concept. This pamphlet is a small attempt to get to the truth of the matter.

I am not a member of a populist organization, nor in the camp of their enemies. My own politics are libertarian, and while agreeing with populists on many issues, I am not necessarily in accord with everything they say or do. Thus, I feel that I have the ability to approach the subject with a degree of objectivity not usually found in the liberal-left media or academia.

Like most people, my first awareness of modern populism arose in the early 1990's with the rise of Italy's Northern League, the Canadian Reform Party and the Ross Perot movement. The Goebbels-like viciousness of the attacks upon these groups; the shrill cries of racist and fascist, truly shocked me. I had not seen anything like this since my student radical days in the 1960's when we were lambasted in the press as Communists and nihilists. (With a bit more justification, one might add)

I decided to learn as much as possible about the subject of populism, and in the process ransacked the university libraries for books and periodicals, read populist journals and listened to hundreds of hours of short-wave and talk radio broadcasts. ESSAYS ON POPULISM is the result of these efforts.

Larry Gambone, Montreal, October 18, 1996

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FOOTNOTES

1. Woods, 116
2. Richards, 5
3. Ibid. 6
4. Adler, Telos 104
5. Wilson, 72. 81
6. Ibid., 80
7. Richards, 20
8. TELOS 104 Introduction. The neo-con, Conor Cruise O'Brien trashed Jefferson in the Sept. 1996 Atlantic Monthly. (The usual Jefferson-as-slave-owner PC slop) This mudslinging shows the desperation of the neo-cons.
9. Ulmen, Piccone, Populism and The New Politics, 4
10. Ibid., 4
11. Piccone, Post Modern Populism
12. Ibid.
13. Ulmen, Piccone,
14. Wilson,
15. Richards, 22
16. Radkey, 19
17. Woods. Recently the League has split, with one wing under Umberto Bossi espousing complete independence for Northern Italy, now named "Padania".
18. Unless mentioned, the following statistics are from Allen Gregg's, "The Big Picture."
19. Montreal Gazette, 18 Oct. 1996
20. Macleans, 24 Jan. 1993
21. Montreal Gazette, 7 Oct. 1994
22. Macleans, 12 April 1993
23. Macleans, 24 Jan. 1993
24. Montreal Gazette, 11 April 1993
25. Montreal Gazette, June 20 1990
26. Macleans, 25 Jan 1995 Since this question refers to the government, for which most people have adverse feelings, one can only conclude the figure would be much higher had the hypothetical cheque been sent by a business or an individual.
27. Macleans, 20 June 1994
28. Macleans, 24 January 1993
29. Le Devoir, 13 Oct 1993
30. Macleans, 25 Dec. 1995
31. "Socialist" is used here in its generally accepted meaning - State ownership or control of the economy, not in its earlier 19th Century conception of co-operation or concern about the "labor problem".
32. I am indebted to George Orwell's "Notes On Nationalism" for this section.
33. Ulmen, Piccone

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WHAT IS POPULISM?

"Populism" is a word like "liberal", "socialist" or "conservative" that can mean almost anything. A word whose meaning varies according to who is saying it. It is frequently used as a pejorative and coupled with the term "right-wing". However, like all words which have been bandied about by the media or bastardized by academics, "populism" does have a precise meaning.

The most accurate definition would be a movement of the people (farmers, workers, self-employed and small businesspeople) opposed to the governmental and corporate elites. As an expression of the people (and not the elites, both "left" and "right") the movement is socially conservative; a concern with the preservation of "traditional" values, the family, community. *Populism is a transversal political philosophy defying traditional ideological dichotomies such as bourgeoisie/worker and Left/Right...Cosmopolitan capitalism and bureaucratic elites are seen as a threat to the "people", i.e., as foreign elements who do not understand their real needs and interests.*¹ Populism is also a broad movement transcending class, racial and geographic divisions. It is based on voluntary support, the political ideas growing out of the indigenous culture and elements of formal political ideologies enter the dialogue only to the extent the ideologies have thoroughly mingled with the popular culture.²

Such movements emphasize decentralism and favor direct-democracy, although the intensity of the emphasis varies. A populism which only attacked the corporations yet left the State untouched would be half-baked, more like social democracy. The core element of populism is a critical attitude toward the State, best summed up in the old slogan revived by the 60's New Left, "Power to the People!" *Central to the movement's ideology is the evocation of a network of concentrated political and/or economic power... the movement's goal is a wide disbursement of that power to the "people"*³.

The means to achieve this are: decentralization of power from the federal government to the states and provinces, decentralizing power to the county level, the right of recall, direct legislation and the use of referenda. In the United States this includes the concept of limited government and a return to the Constitution. Italian populists favor "integralist federalism" and Canadian populists a regional approach.

Anyone who sincerely wishes to empower the populace and disempower the State cannot be considered a reactionary or rightist. Instituting self-government and limiting the role of the State are the key elements of modernity - the point of separation between the *ancien regime* of slavery, feudalism and autocracy and a new concept of government discovered in the 18 and 19th Centuries. The true

reactionaries are those who wish to give more power to the State; a return in modern technological form of the Bronze and Iron Age bureaucratic despotisms of Babylon, Egypt, Rome and China, and the mercantilist autocracies of 17th century Europe. Or as one observer put it, state capitalism is *a refudalization of society*.⁴

False and True Populism

Populism is NOT a folksy style or self-proclaimed label. True populism is actually quite rare, for every alleged populism probably not one in ten is actually the true item. The reason for the misunderstanding? Largely an effort by the media and liberal academics to undermine what the elite sees as a dangerous adversary. Here in Canada, all the old line parties whether Conservative, Liberal or NDP are united against any populist impulse which would undermine their ability to use the State as a means to enrich themselves and their supporters. Intellectuals and media figures tied to this single party with three branches spare no expense in denigrating their enemy - all under the guise of objective reporting, of course. The method of attack is twofold; populism in general is deemed reactionary, or it is said that the present day variety is right wing and therefore has little in common with the "old time populists" who were "progressive".

There is a semi-populism. This consists of vague appeals to "throw the bums out" and the recitation of some, but not all of the populist platform. The anti-tax movements in Northern Europe are examples of this. Ross Perot's Reform Party probably fits here as well. There is also a pseudo-populism which has the style, but lacks the content, or on the contrary, grabs some of the populist platform but uses it as a stage to launch racist and fascist ideology. David Duke being the prime example. Pseudo-populism is a kind of parasitism on the populist sentiment. Every two-bit hustler, demagogue and wanna-be dictator likes to consider himself a populist. And the liberal media do nothing to discourage these illusions.

There is also a difference between a "pure" and a "hybrid" populism. Pure populism grows directly from the grass roots and its leaders are from the people - artisans, school teachers, small town newspaper editors, farmers. With the hybrid variety professional politicians or members of the elite adopt populism as a conscious strategy. (This does not necessarily mean they are insincere about populist goals) Examples of pure populism would be the 19th Century Peoples Party or the present day American Constitutional Movement. Examples of the hybrid form would include the Russian Narodniks, and the Buchanan campaign.

Populism should not be considered Rousseauism or Jacobinism.

State tends to embody that goodness in the eyes of the nationalist. To weaken the power of the State in any manner, say, by proposing decentralization, becomes equated with lack of patriotism or even treason. The growth of the State also leads to foreign entanglements and war. The nationalist denounces anyone who doesn't want his country involved in a foreign war as a tool of the enemy. We saw this in both World Wars where the Populists were slandered as pro-German.

Nationalism is the enemy of culture, for culture is never static or purely self-devised, but is always in formation and always borrowing foreign influences. Consider such "American" foods as pizza, hot dogs, chow mein and burritos. This mundane example shows how cultures actually evolve. Nationalists would like to stop this process and so mummify culture. As elitists, they have no faith in the people and so use State power to force uniformity with their "purist", limited and chauvinistic views. The patriot does not fear the foreign, for he knows his society is strong enough to assimilate new influences. The patriot is concerned only when something is being forced upon him by a foreign invader or the elite's social engineering.

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by one of its foremost exponents, Mussolini, who stated, "Everything for the State, Everything by the State, Nothing against the State."

Fundamentally xenophobic and chauvinist, (in spite of all claims to the contrary) nationalism needs enemies and so leads automatically to war and imperial conquest. Patriots are so-called isolationists who believe it best to "mind your own business" and "stay out of foreign affairs".

Nationalists fan the flames of resentment and stir up hatred. This is most especially true of so-called national liberation struggles or petty quarrels involving a smaller State and a more powerful neighbor.

All the old injuries, real, exaggerated and imagined are paraded forth to make the adversary State or people look as wicked as possible. Resentment is a base sentiment akin to envy. Resentment is infantilizing, turning an entire people subject to it into a collective whining adolescent, in the same way an immature person means how his parents or society are to blame for his failure in life. Such an emotion is a form of energy not dissipated when the "enemy" is dispatched. This energy turns inward, rather than being spent in a more constructive manner. The nationalist elite "finds" new enemies for the people to hate - minorities, anarchists, "reactionaries", "agents of American imperialism", etc. The result being that the new regime is far more cruel than its colonial or "comprador" predecessor.

The American Revolution, that classic example of patriotism, was not like this. The regularization of relations between England and the new USA were a priority for the Americans. True, many Loyalists were driven out, but there was no lasting search for "enemies" and after the War of 1812 the British and Americans became friends. This happened because the American Revolution, occurring before nationalism was formulated as an ideology, was not a nationalist revolution, but rather an uprising to restore the freedoms which had been an integral aspect of colonial society.

Nationalism is always authoritarian. National minorities have to be forcefully assimilated into the Nation State. The autonomy the nationalist desires for his own people is never granted to his own minorities - self determination is for him alone. There is a greedy, selfish, dog-in-the-manger attitude.

Nationalism is Romantic, based upon an emotional appeal rooted in abstractions; it is a secular pseudo-religion. Patriotism is also emotional, but is based upon common sense - the reality of being rooted in community or place. Nationalism is also of recent origin, dating from the 19th Century, while patriotism is as old as humankind.

Nationalists always require a centralized State. It is inevitable that if one's group consciousness is encapsulated in a State it will lead to an increase in State power. If the country and its people are reduced to the State and the country is something positive or good, then the Nation

People's Power does not mean using the State to do everything and anything the People's Will decides. Such would be tyranny of the majority. Populism means limiting the power of the State so people are free to go about their own affairs. That which is presently done by state capitalism is best carried out by voluntary local agencies. *Populists regard State power as always corrupt and corrupting...In its simplest terms populism is the community defending itself against oppressive or inadequate agents of the state...*

Economically, populism attacks the corporate interests in a variety of ways. These have included the promotion of co-ops and credit unions, the Single Tax, free land, a demand for "free banking" and "social credit", abolition of central banking and the notorious US Federal Reserve, the coining of silver, the printing of Greenbacks, abolition of special privileges subsidies, nationalization of banking and railroads, institution of tariffs, removal of tariffs. Although sometimes contradictory, a number of common themes are present. These are the preservation of high-wage industrial employment, economic democracy, preservation of the family farm and a reduction in the power of the financial interests.

In the 19th and early 20th Century there was a definite social democratic aspect to populism as found in the demand to nationalize the banks and railroads. However, at no time were they *...forwarding a socialist society but reacting to the abuses of state capitalism...* Since state ownership has proven to be a new form of tyranny, modern populists have abandoned these "socialistic" planks. As a result, left-wing critics of contemporary populism like to compare the "old-time populism" which they saw as "leftist" and therefore "good", with the modern sort, lacking the state capitalist aspect and therefore "rightist" and "bad".

Populism is complex because it represents the views of the ordinary person, views unlike those of intellectuals of right and left, which cannot be fitted into some narrow ideological straight jacket. If a working person wants a religion he will join a church. The world of the intellectual is not the world of the vast majority and most people do not share their rootless, nihilistic, temporary, rationalistic views and lifestyles. The left loves the working class, yet hates the individual worker whom it dismisses as racist, sexist, homophobic, consumerist and superstitious and therefore needing a leader. (themselves) The right loves his so-called race, ethnic group or culture yet hates the ordinary Frenchman, Canadian, etc. as an ignorant, materialistic, uncultured boor, and therefore needing a leader. (themselves)

People are individuals, each with his/her own history - an ensemble including culture, education, family background, ethnicity, religion, and a psychological state with all its prejudices and irrationalities. Each individual is therefore unique and cannot be pigeon-holed. While

abstractions such as class or ethnicity might at times be handy generalizations, they do not describe the real person. Intellectual abstractions can no more deal with populism, the distillate of the views of all these individuals, than it can comprehend the individual person.

Populism And Libertarianism

*Populists have traditionally made the anarchists' case against concentrated power...*⁷

There is a direct relationship between libertarian thought and populism. One of these is the influence of libertarian thinkers. Proudhon influenced Herzen, one of the forefathers of Russian populism. The anarchist, Bakunin was an influence on them as well. The American Individualist Anarchists and contemporary free market libertarians have influenced American populism. In Chile, Mutualists (Proudhonists) helped found a populist party. In Canada, the United Farmers had Guild Socialist and syndicalist aspects. The Italian Leagues owe a debt to Proudhon for their concept of federalism.

The early mutualist and anarcho-syndicalist movements, like populist movements, were quite socially conservative. All emphasized responsibility, self-help, education, morality and preservation of the family to counter what they saw as the decadence and libertinism of the capitalist system. Of all political ideologies Populism is closest to that of anarchism and libertarianism, in that seeks to weaken the power of the state. Communism, social democracy, progressive liberalism and Tory conservatism all seek either to maintain the authoritarian status quo or increase the influence of the State in our lives.

The New Left And Populism

The early American New Left (1960-65) saw itself as a middle class movement seeking to encourage "participatory democracy", local control and basic civil and democratic rights. Its goals were fundamentally ethical in nature, stemming not from marxism but from libertarianism. These included; the anarchist Paul Goodman, the libertarian Albert Camus and Mohandas Gandhi who was influenced by libertarian ideas. The New Left was taken over and destroyed by Marxist Leninist ideologues who made it the precursor of today's New Class political correctness tyrants. For a brief period however, it had definite libertarian and populist aspects.

These aspects were strong enough to encourage the most militant sector of the Old Right to join forces with the New Left. Since the Old Right was a lineal descendent of early 20th Century Populism and

PATRIOTISM VS NATIONALISM³²

*To be truly "populist" they have to be "anti-nationalist", since populism is first and foremost a "protest" against outside control of the local people's affairs.*³³

Patriotism is founded upon a fondness for, and desire to preserve, ones locality, customs, mores, history, culture and traditions. We are all born and raised somewhere and share in a culture and history, hence patriotism is natural and is found everywhere from the "primitive" tribe to the modern industrial society. Only intellectuals, the very wealthy and the lumpenproletariat are so rootless, so alienated, so dispossessed as not to have this sensibility. Fundamentally local in origin, patriotism is centered on the village, neighborhood, county, or region, for even in the era of the automobile and jet plane most people's real world does not go much beyond a twenty mile radius.

Patriotism is not just local. It also extends to regions such as states or provinces and the nation as a whole. Even though Texans differ quite markedly from Rhode Islanders and Burgundians from Normans there is a genuine sense in which they are all Americans or French. To say this sensibility has been formed through politics or conquest and is thus artificial, unlike villages or neighborhoods, is to overlook the fact these larger units over time take on a life of their own. There is also the fact that the larger entity can allow the smaller to exist. - In union there is strength. Eg., without Canadian Confederation the former colonies of British North America might have been swallowed up by the United States. The Thirteen Colonies as separate countries may have been dominated by the European powers.

Patriotism is not based upon a State or government, but on a people and their customs. American patriots do not glorify Washington DC and the Federal bureaucracy, but rather look to the Constitution which guarantees plurality and local government. Patriotism is pluralist, since it is founded on localism. One is a patriot on a number of different levels. Think of the Swiss who are members of their commune and their canton, who are German-Swiss, French-Swiss, Italian-Swiss and Romish-Swiss but also just plain Swiss! The bigger the group, the harder it is to envisage. Anyone who makes the Nation State the be-all of existence is putting the cart before the horse.

Nationalism is Jacobin centralization, a romantic glorification of the Nation State. Local patriotisms are submerg'd by this obscene cult. Jacobinism, the 18th Century by-word in centralism and statism, was the father of modern nationalism and through the ultra-Jacobin, Babeuf, the father of communism. Fascism and communism, those evil collectivist twins, are the offspring of Jacobinism. Nationalism is best exemplified

reforms and compromises - seen as one more sign of "bourgeois decadence".

7. Fascism is a "socialist" movement which, at the very minimum, seeks State control of the economy.³¹ It is completely opposed to notions of *laissez faire* and brands such an idea as "bourgeois", (and with the Nazis, Jewish as well)

If you have read thus far in this pamphlet you will realize that this set of ideas is about as far removed from populism as you can get. Not one of the seven points has any echo in the populist movement. But what about fascism and the left?

The similarities between fascism and the marxist-leninist-stalinist left (ie communists) should be obvious. With perhaps the exception of point 4, the two ideologies would seem virtually identical. Communists favor centralization and statism, the only difference with fascism, is they favor even tighter state control. Stalinism idealizes the elite - the vanguard party and the Leader, whether Mao, Stalin, Castro or Kim Il Sung. They are also stridently nationalistic, base morality on expediency, use the "big lie technique" against their opponents, despise democracy, and glorify violence and revolution. And like Hitler and the Nazis they have slaughtered their real and imagined opponents by the millions. The only difference is the Stalinists have killed even more people than the fascists.

And what about the moderate left? Progressive liberals and social democrats also love statism and centralization. The difference between moderate leftists, stalinists and fascists on this issue is purely a matter of degree. Moderate leftists claim to be democrats, but, fearing the people whom they consider ignorant, thoroughly reject direct democracy. Against their opponents, such as populists, conservatives, anarchists and libertarians, the moderates do not hesitate to use "big lie" propaganda. These same people, claiming to be in favor of democracy and human rights whitewash dictators and support oppression. This is true for both corporate liberals who favored "right-wing" dictators and left-liberals who adore "left-wing" tyrants. Moderate leftism is at the forefront of the move to disarm the population - an action identical to that of Adolf Hitler when he assumed power. While it would be exceedingly unjust to equate the moderate left with the Nazis, they certainly have more in common with fascism than populism has.

Individualism, this development was not all that surprising. The common points between the two groups were: the maximization of liberty and decentralization, a fondness for "revisionist" history and opposition to war, corporate liberalism, big business and statism. Important "Old Right-New Leftists" included the economist Murray Rothbard, Goldwater's former speech writer Karl Hess and David Friedman, son of Milton Friedman. This synthesis broke apart when the New Left went Stalinist.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF POPULIST THOUGHT

1. The United States.

There is no doubt...that American Populism has been an expression of hostility to state power...and that most populists have looked upon Thomas Jefferson, the great original critic of consolidated power, as their patron saint.

Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson are the patron saints of American populism. Jefferson's concept was one of individual liberty through a highly decentralized republic of republics, the basic unit of which was ward government. He was hostile to the nascent Eastern Establishment and the banking interests around the reactionary Alexander Hamilton. Jackson too, opposed the Establishment and shut down the central banks. He also enfranchised all male adults. (except slaves)

The Agrarian movement, the Grange, Knights of Labour, the Individualist Anarchists, Henry George's Single Tax and the People's Party were attempts, within a Jeffersonian context, by farmers and workers to overcome the crisis caused by statism and corporate capitalism. This attempt was not reactionary and opposed to industrialization, but one which merely wished to control its development in a way that benefitted all the people and in a manner that did not undermine autonomy.

The US Federal Government took on a national role at the end of the 19th Century in order to deal with the problems created by industrialization and corporate capitalism. However, the solution proved worse than the original problem.³² The solution was the gradual adoption of state capitalism. The left aided the ruling elite. Leftism rejected private property outright, projecting collectivist solutions homogenizing all property as state property.³³ The alternative to this authoritarian vision was Populism, which was soon defeated by the Establishment and certain aspects of it co-opted into so-called Progressive Liberalism and

the New Deal.

Confusing the discussion of American Populism is the question of "conservatism", for many modern populists see themselves as "conservatives." However, *sectors of the American Right which unlike its European counterpart, was never "conservative" in the traditional sense of relegitimizing aristocratic prerogatives...If conservatism ever made any sense in the US it was in terms of conserving the cultural peculiarity typical of colonial experience. In this sense...American conservatism...was always in some sense populist.*¹¹

Specifically American populism, both in the past and today is...*that long standing tradition of direct democracy, localism and cultural specificity...[which] carries on a distinct American democratic tradition predicated on autonomous self-governing communities.*¹²

Liberalism and leftism have never liked populism, feeling it a threat to their god, the State. This is particularly true of academic studies, as the reality of...*populism* [is] very different from the stereotypes still in vogue in American universities...¹³ *The greatest barrier to a proper understanding of American Populism lies in the confusion that has been spread... by liberal historians.*¹⁴ While the clichés from the 1950's stressed a supposedly reactionary and anti-industrial attitude on the part of populists, the new anti-populist hate propaganda screams racism. *Populism is not to be dismissed as an inchoate pre-industrial form of rural protest, but is democratic ideology couched in the immediately accessible culture of the people.*¹⁵

Contemporary American populism cannot be reduced to one party or movement. On the one hand, there is Ross Perot's Reform Party and the Buchananes within the Republican Party. More important perhaps than either of these are the vast number of small groups and newsletters of the Patriots and Constitutionalists. There are also national movements in opposition to the income tax or in favor retaining common law and jury trial. Local movements abound, dedicated to homeschooling or decentralizing power to the county level. The most militant wing of the populist movement, and the focus of Establishment hatred, are the militias. Much sympathy is found for these movements among free market libertarians, evangelical Christians and even some "left" libertarians.

2 Canada

Canada in the 19th Century was dominated by a reactionary, anti-democratic and anti-republican mentality stemming from British colonialism and ultramontaine Catholicism. This mentality, albeit adapted to modernity, still exists in the form of statism and bureaucratic control by an economic and political elite. Democratic and egalitarian influences

Gregor and Otto Strasser helped form the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP or Nazi's). The Strassers were unhappy with the majority Social Democrats failure to pursue the Revolution of 1918 and what they felt was a sell-out of Germany at Versailles. The Nazis remained a tiny left-nationalist sect until taken over by Adolf Hitler. The Austrian demagogue moved the party in the direction of hardline Anti Semitic racist nationalism, giving them a base among broken-down aristocrats, ex-soldiers, lumpenproletarian scum, and bankrupt farmers. As with the Fascists, a left nazism remained, centered on the Strasser brothers. Not as lucky as their Italian counterparts, this group was liquidated on Hitler's orders in 1934.

The reduction to impotence of the original militant left wing fascism does not mean the succeeding movements were conservative or enamoured of capitalism and the free market. State control of the economy and of all aspects of society remained the goal of the dominant Fascist and Nazi tendencies. National socialism remained national socialism, in spite of the program being modified to accommodate their new supporters. Nazism and Fascism were no different in this regard than was Social Democracy, or for that matter Communism during and after the Popular Front period.

Fascism and its Relation to Populism and The Left.

What are the essential ideas of fascism and how do they relate to both populism and the left?

1. Fascism favors centralization and a very strong State. Such ideas as a "limited State", decentralism and federalism are an anathema.
2. Democracy, and especially direct democracy, democratic and human rights are "bourgeois" and a sign of decadence and weakness. People need organization on military lines with a strong Leader to guide them, since they are incapable of self-government.
3. Morality is "bourgeois". Virtue is based upon power, national interest, the needs of the "exceptional man" and with Nazi-fascism the "blood" or "race". The end always justifies the means. The "big lie" technique of propaganda is used throughout.
4. War and violence are good. Both are "cleansing" and are a trial of strength for the "Man of Action". War kills off the "inferior". The military is "efficient" and the model of the future society.
5. Fascism emphasizes the elite and the need for this group to dominate society through a vanguard party. At the top of the elite emerges the person endowed by History - The Leader, who is the ideal of the Man of Action.
6. Fascism is a revolutionary movement and has no use for piecemeal

FASCISM, POPULISM AND LEFTISM

Nazi means national socialist. Since we are against socialism in any form, how can they call us nazis? William Cooper, The Hour Of The Times

Before me lies a copy of Maclean's Magazine - "Canada's National Magazine" and the leftist journal Covert Action. The cover of Maclean's and the articles inside purport to be about the Militia Movement. Both cover and articles abound with photos of swastikas and racist slogans. Well, what can one expect from the liberal mass media? Covert Action carries an article by some intellectual thug named Chlip Berlet who repeats the same hateful crap.

Smearing opponents as fascists is not new. It is an old Marxist-Leninist tactic. Only now it has been adopted by liberals. Way back in the 1920's, anarchists and social democrats opposed to communism were vilified as "anarcho-fascists" and "social-fascists". In the 1930's Trotsky and his supporters were slandered as Gestapo agents and Trotskyism called fascist. During WWII the CP and New Deal types branded opponents of US entry (America First) as Nazi sympathizers.

The Hidden Truth About Fascism

The origins of fascism reveal the bad conscience of the left. Fascism is not derived from conservatism, but from leftism, and not the moderate left either. Benito Mussolini was the chief leader of the revolutionary wing of the Italian Socialist Party. Unlike other militant socialists such as Amadeo Bordiga or Antonio Gramsci, Mussolini was a nationalist. This was revealed as early as 1911 when he supported the Italian conquest of Libya. The break between Mussolini and his friends occurred during WWI when he supported the war effort and the majority of Socialists did not. These militant pro-war socialists were few in number and formed action groups, the name of which in Italian is fasci. It should be noted that prior to the present use of the term, anarchists and socialists all had their fasci.

Mussolini's fasci had little support among the workers, who stayed with the majority Socialists, the Catholic party or the Anarchists. At the war's end the fasci did find themselves a base - the returning soldiers and middle class people worried about Bolshevism. The Mussolini socialist fasci moved to the right to accommodate their new membership. However, a left-wing remained within the Fascist Party which continued to stress the socialist side of fascist "national socialism".

Meanwhile in Germany, two dissident left-wing Social Democrats,

came from the United States with the poorer Loyalists and later immigrants, especially from Scotland, Ireland and the USA. The American republican government was a living example of what many Canadians wanted, but what their masters would not let them have. Canadian populism was centred in the West and in many senses was a spill-over from the US movement. The Grange and Non-Partisan movements developed Canadian counterparts. European radicalisms brought by immigrants blended with the American influence. British Guild Socialism was an influence upon the United Farmers, and Social Credit was a British concept that split off from the Guild Socialists. Evangelical Christianity in its attacks on the social evils of the day such as drunkenness, prostitution and poverty moved toward political action and also gave impetus to the populist movement.

Two discontented areas, the West and the Maritimes, developed populist movements. The West was unhappy because it was dominated by the federal government, a high tariff forced people to buy expensive Eastern manufactured goods, the railways had the best land and exploited their monopoly to the hilt. (The railways, in turn, being a creature of the State) The Maritimes felt betrayed by Confederation, their industrial base eroded by Central Canada. They felt they were becoming an internal colony. Down-east populism tended to be of the hybrid variety as the Maritime Rights Movement was a creation of the local elites and the Antigonish Movement came out of an extension program of St. Francis Xavier University. In the West, populist movements arose only on the prairies, since British Columbia was made up almost entirely of industrial workers more attracted to a radical, anti-statist form of socialism and anarcho-syndicalism. It was on the prairies where the farmer-labor mix that generated "classical" populism existed.

The Non Partisan League organized in Alberta at the end of WWI, and out of this grew the United Farmers of Alberta. The right-wing of the UFA was composed of discontented Liberals who would later help wreck populism. At the centre stood Henry Wise Wood, an American populist who promoted the formation of co-operatives and "group government". This latter concept which owed something to syndicalism, would have had a parliament made up of representatives of the farmers, industrial workers, artisans, small business etc. Somewhat more radical was William Irvine, a Scottish immigrant Guild Socialist. For Irvine, Guild Socialism was to be complemented on the financial side by Social Credit. Many UFA members though likewise and the organization adopted Social Credit along with group government. At the radical fringe stood agrarian syndicalists, influenced by the OBU. It is important that the UFA saw itself as populist, that is wanting the people, not just farmers to have power, and a great degree of unity existed among farmers, labor and the small town middle classes.

The UFA swept into power in 1925, but was unable to do very much about implementing its program. This was partly the result of the pseudo-populist Liberals in their ranks. Then came the Depression of 1929 and they found themselves losing members as farmers went bankrupt. The premier was accused (falsely it turned out) of a sex scandal and this further undermined confidence in the UFA.

Meanwhile, a well known high school teacher and popular Evangelical radio preacher, Bill Aberhart, discovered Social Credit and began explaining the concept on his program. He formed Social Credit Clubs and thousands of UFA and ex-UFA members flocked to them. Aberhart found himself pushed into politics and a Social Credit organization was cobbled together. Like the UFA before him, Aberhart and his friends were swept into power by a large majority in 1932. Aberhart's Social Credit was not as radical as the UFA, but they did propose a "social dividend" of \$25 a month to every adult, supported co-operatives and wanted a government composed of popular representatives and not party members. The federal government refused to allow Aberhart, or the succeeding Social Credit Premier Ernest Manning, to implement these programs. Social Credit withered into an Alberta Tory party by the mid-1940's. A party called Social Credit dominated politics in British Columbia from 1952 to 1990. This group had nothing to do with the Social Credit of Aberhart, let alone the UFA, being an opportunistic coalition of the Tory and Liberal parties. It often used populist rhetoric, but in practice, with its statism and centralization, one would be hard pressed to find a Western Canadian party less populist than BC Social Credit.

While the UFA members became Social Crediters, in Saskatchewan the United Farmers helped form the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. For a number of years there was interest in Social Credit among CCFers and when a Social Credit organization was formed in Saskatchewan, the two groups briefly co-operated against the Establishment parties. The CCF is best seen as semi- and hybrid-populist - semi-populist because it cared little for altering the government. In more than 30 years in power the party never lifted a finger to democratize and decentralize political power. The CCF was hybrid populist due to the heavy influence of a Fabian socialist elite. This hybrid quality could be seen in 1936, the first election the CCF contested. The party platform included the nationalization of farm land. Farmers were supposed to lease their land from the State. Such a program shows the disconnected and unreal world of intellectuals and leftist dogmatists. One couldn't find a better way of alienating prairie farmers than wanting to take their property from them. The opposition hammered the CCF and the expected landslide victory turned into a mere seven seats.

prognostication. Virtually all commentators have been wrong in their views of how the economy would behave in the future. The reason for this failure is there are far too many variables to take into account. Now if the economy has too many variables, what about society in general?

When discussing history we must look at a minimum of six factors.

These are:

1. the structural aspects i.e. the political and economic systems and their underlying influence. These will have a major impact upon history, but must not be overstressed.
2. accidents of history
3. the psychological state of the elites
4. ideology and religious beliefs of the elites
4. the educational level, religion and ideologies of the masses
5. conspiracies
6. conflicts with other countries.

One major problem with conspiracy theories is psychological. They let people off the hook and they slot nicely into the dominant nihilist cult of the victim, also known as the Age of Whine. If all our problems are the result of some little group of nasty people, then I am a victim, it isn't my fault that things are messed up, I am not responsible. The fact is, if the Constitution has been ripped up, it is because the American people have allowed this to happen. Every time the Establishment said "Sorry folks, but we've got this real serious problem here and we must, just temporarily mind you, take away your rights in order to correct it", most Americans nodded their heads in agreement. The notion of responsibility is one of those important civic virtues without which a society breaks down. And yet, those who would combat this breakdown are contributing to it through their conspiracy theories.

Conspiracy theories create an ambience leading to an acceptance of more extreme theories. These extremists discredit the movement by opening it to ridicule and dismissal as a bunch of crackpots. Of course, the media will try to do this anyway, but why give the enemy live ammunition?

In order to change society it is necessary to have a clear understanding of how it works. How can you repair a car if you lack the knowledge? Conspiracy theories hide a great deal of the real world from the believer. Hence, they are caught off guard when something happens which doesn't fit into the theory. The conspiracy theorist tends to spend a lot of time adjusting his theory to suit the new reality, or ignoring the new evidence and hoping it will go away. And I am not just talking about "right-wing extremists", for none do this more than marxists.

care about people like me". Small business, on the other hand, got a high approval rate.
75% say government pays more attention to Big Business than people.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND POPULISM

Is paranoia really a form of awareness? - Kerry Thornley

Three things to consider:

1. Which is better, a complacent acceptance of the status quo or believing in a bankers conspiracy to establish a New World Order? The conspiracy-believer is saying, using common sense logic, "The present situation must have a cause, it just didn't happen as an act of nature."
2. There IS a difference between an Iowa farmer and his banker conspiracies and a tenured professor and his capitalist conspiracies. We expect the Prof to have a more complex and subtle understanding of the world and the processes that make it go round. Yet the farmer is deemed paranoid and the marxoid's views are only "controversial" or "hard-hitting".

3. There are conspiracies and they are being plotted all the time. Concentrated political and economic power means the existence of conspiracy. Those in power conspire to keep it. Those without power conspire to get it - simple as that.

Thus conspiracy theories cannot be written off as irrelevant or meaningless, nor should the populist who believes in New World Order conspiracies be contemptuously dismissed as a "paranoid right-wing wacko". But not every unpleasant event is the result of a conspiracy, nor can the whole mess we find ourselves in be explained in this fashion. Explaining the world through plots by the powerful becomes problematic when it becomes a Grand Theory laying out the causes of say, the last 200 years.

For example, the marxist conspiracy sees all wars, environmental destruction, the problem of underdevelopment, racism, the inferior position of women, etc., laid at the feet of the wicked capitalists. There are also the wilder conspiracies - the Masonic Illuminati conspiracy to destroy the United States, the 5000 year old conspiracy by the "white man" to destroy Black people and the Anti-Semitic rants about Jewish conspiracies to corrupt Western civilization. (or destroy Blacks)

All these theories from the moderate to the loony suffer from a common misunderstanding about the causes of history. Conspiracy theorists do not understand that history is exceedingly complex and that an important event cannot be reduced to one set of actors or one cause. To get an idea of just how complex, consider the failure of economic

The CCF did maintain a certain populist appeal as the "party of the little guy". When it amalgamated with the Canadian Labour Congress in 1961 to form the New Democratic Party, it had a tougher time selling this image - for in reality the party was the tool of the trade union bureaucracy. In the 1980's the NDP was taken over by New Class elements who imposed their politically correct agenda. Working class supporters quickly lost interest and switched to the Liberals or the Reform Party.

The Reform Party, organized in 1988 is rooted in a long history of opposition to Ottawa and old-time demands for direct democracy. Western alienation increased with the Fed's social engineering and heavy taxes on the working population coupled with an ever growing deficit. Support for Reform is strong among people concerned with the growing breakdown of values in society, most especially, although not exclusively, Evangelical Christians. Reform seeks to strip Ottawa of most of its powers, decentralize these to the provinces and institute the old populist demands of recall, initiative and direct legislation. Although the mass media and the leftists rant and rave about "right-wing extremism", in reality, it has been about 70 years since we have seen demands this radical raised at a mass level in Canada.

Reform is strongest in Alberta but also has much support in BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Remaining trapped in the West is something the Reformers fear, since they have only one MP from Ontario. Nonetheless, they managed to replace both the Tories and the NDP during the last election. Several ridings in BC that for generations had been solidly left turned to Reform, showing the high level of working class alienation with the Establishment's radical face.

The movement faces two major hurdles to become a permanent force. There is the problem of appearing too extreme or right-wing for the average Canadian. Canadians hate extremism and although generally socially conservative, do not like anything seen as "far-right." As a mass movement of middle and working class discontent, Reform attracts all kinds of people, and inevitably some of them are far-right loonies. The media and the left do everything possible to tar Reform with the extremist label and it has hurt their credibility. The other problem is, what the Establishment can't wreck, it steals. Much of the Reform program, except radical decentralism and direct democracy, please note, has been stolen both federally and provincially, by the Liberal and Conservative Parties. Reform is in danger of becoming a regional protest movement like the CCF and Social Credit - A protest movement that merely modernizes the Old Corruption but does not abolish it.

3. Europe

Except for turn of the century Russia and present day Italy, populism has never been as important in Europe as it has been in the New World. Part of this is the result of Social Democratic hegemony in Northern Europe. The labor parties absorbed much of the discontent which otherwise would have gone into forming populist movements. In Southern Europe, anarcho-syndicalism provided a viable decentralist alternative to Establishment politics.

The Narodniks in Russia (1870's-80's) were unusual populists in that they were middle-class students who went out to the countryside to organize the peasants against the autocratic Czarist regime. The movement was best described as "hybrid-populist". They were inspired by Alexander Herzen who spoke for the liberation of the peasant and the dignity of the individual, Peter Lavrov and his concept of an "ethical social movement", Nicolai Mikhailovsky and the struggle for individuality as the focal point of history, and Mikhail Bakunin the great anarchist. In 1900 these early attempts bore fruit in the formation of the Russian populist party, the Social Revolutionary Party. This group, which had the support of the vast majority of peasants, and actually won the only free election prior to 1996, was liquidated by the Bolsheviks in 1918-20. *The SR's favored the most scrupulous observance of personal rights, and went in for all such features of the ultraliberal state as decentralization, bills of rights...which would afford maximum security to untrammelled development of individuality.*¹⁸ They favored local, self-governing communities united in a federation. The SR's desired such classical populist measures as proportional voting, recall, initiative and referendum. They also favored common ownership of the land. This was not some intellectual socialist pipedream, but in the mir and the obshchina was the traditional method of the Russian peasantry. The SR's proposed co-operatives for industry, and once again this was rooted in Russian tradition, that of the artisans' artels or guilds.

Switzerland stands out like a beacon of liberty within the European Statist sea and practices all the direct democracy, local control and federalism that North American populists can only daydream about. (not to mention that the Swiss can freely bear arms) Regionalist movements and a Federalist Party (based on Proudhonist ideas) have existed in France for many years, but have never made much of an impact. Poujadism in the 1950's and the recent tax-revolt parties in the Scandinavian countries have had populist overtones but are not genuine populist movements. France's Front National claims to be populist and its attacks on the New World Order have a definite populist ring to them, but the FN is Jacobin, not Jeffersonian. They want a powerful centralized State and deplore the miserable little bit of decentralization that has

Immigration

63% say immigrants should assimilate.²³
47% say there are "too many immigrants".
Only 12% want more immigration than the government's target, 66% are opposed.²⁴

Fiscal Conservatism

62% of Canadians have regular savings or investment programs.²⁵
When asked what they would do with a windfall \$10,000, 81% said pay off debts, save or invest it.

Honesty.

69% would return a \$1000 cheque inadvertently sent to them by the government.²⁶

Discrimination and Quota Systems

74% of Canadians oppose quota systems for employment and education. Merit seen as the only criteria.

Education

General loss of faith in educational system since WWII is nothing short of remarkable. 7 out of 8 categories on educational performance given only fair or poor ratings.

Abortion and Homosexuality

30% for abortion on demand, 60% in favor under certain circumstances, 10% pro-life.
24% Canadians feel sympathetic toward homosexuals, 60% neutral and 20% hostile.
67% think same sex couples raising children "a bad thing" and agree that the "best type of family" is the hetero couple.²⁷

Government

71% say that an MP should vote according to the majority view of his constituents and not according to his party line or wishes. 73% say their faith in politicians has decreased.²⁸
83% of Quebecers say they don't believe in politicians.²⁹
50% said none of Canada's parties stood for anything they believe in. 71% said that the federal government hampered economic growth.
86% agree with Ottawa's deficit slashing, but 86% say they haven't gone far enough and 59% say governments should also cut taxes.³⁰

Big Business

The majority of Canadians agree that "people who run corporations don't

socked away for emergencies, otherwise such minor problems as a burst pipe or the winter's heating bill become major disasters. Education and hard work must be valued or son and daughter will not have a better future than the parents. Home, family, friends, the neighborhood are the worker's pride and security. Anything that threatens them threatens him/her. The worker desires stability in an unstable world. Who can seriously object to this desire?

Most of the changes in life do not seem to be positive changes. They are almost always imposed from outside by forces over which you have no control. A freeway through your heretofore quiet, unpolluted neighborhood, an influx of newcomers with strange and sometimes offensive ways, the shutting down of a large factory, being dragged off to fight 10,000 miles away against someone you never heard of before, these are some of the unwelcome changes working people face in their lives.

Bigots, xenophobes and chauvinists do exist. Some, like flies in amber, are fossilized remnants of 19th Century pseudo-scientific superstition. These folks are genuine racists. Laws are a poor means of combatting such bigotry. You can't force people to like each other. Nor will censorship help. It is better to accept the fact that human beings are not entirely rational and there will always be people with oddball or hateful opinions. The best way to limit bigotry is to create a climate of liberty and let nature take its course. As an example, 100 years ago probably ninety-eight out of a hundred "white people" were racists (in the genuine sense of racism -believing "white" Europeans superior on the "evolutionary scale" to Blacks and Orientals) Today, no more than 10% of the population believe this nonsense. This rather amazing change came about NOT through laws, but through education (chiefly of the informal variety) and communication.

The Socially Conservative Majority¹⁸

The Family

54% of Canadians are married, 8% live common law, 3% are single with children. 83% of children live in two-parent families. 87% said that the family "has become more important" to them. 88% had one or no sexual partner in the last year.²⁰ 2.8% Americans were gay or bisexual and 2% of married couples have "kinky sex".²¹

Religion

Only 9% of population are non-believers, 78% are affiliated with a Christian church.²²

occurred in France. The one authentic contemporary European populist movement is the Northern League of Italy.

The League demands a radical decentralization of Italy, involving the formation of a Swiss style (genuine) federation and major surgery performed on the State. They also favor abandonment of State Capitalism and are also hostile to the big corporations. Their concept of *integralist* federalism owes much to Proudhon. Modernization occurred in Northern Italy without destroying the small towns, in fact their cultural and economic importance increased. This factor has created a base for populism. The League has existed as a protest against party-domination of affairs and the extremely corrupt and inefficient state-system. *This movement is ...not a reaction to modernization. Rather it seeks to redefine modernity away from centralized forms...towards local and regional entities, which populists see as more effective than centralized decision making institutions....The main argument is that the Italian State does not embody the principles of a modern society.*¹⁷

4. Latin America

Populism is one of the two organic forms of radicalism in Hispanic America (The other being anarchism) The Chilean Democratic Party founded in 1887 by libertarian artisans was the first Latin American populist party. The Mexican Revolution had many populist aspects, especially the peasant movements of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. Chilean Christian Democracy had a populist wing. Definitely NOT populist were the regimes of the Brazilian dictator Vargas and the infamous Juan Peron of Argentina. (Peron was actually history's most successful fascist, building a strong working class following and a powerful trade union movement - something Mussolini could never do, except in his imagination.)

Populism did not become influential until the 1940's, and when it did, this was largely the work of Victor Haya de la Torre's *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (APRA) movement of the 1930's. APRA founded groups in Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru and Argentina, and even though none were successful, their ideas took root.

APRA, and Latin American populism generally, rejected marxism and sought an politics rooted in the Latin American situation - a politics based on early patriot revolutionaries like Simon Bolivar, the example of the Mexican Revolution and the labor and peasant movements. The populist parties were: 1. revolutionary 2. anti-communist 3. patriotic 4. in favor of a Latin American federation 5. anti-imperialist 6. decentralist. Economically, they favored the development of co-operatives, land reform, free trade and the nationalization of utilities and important natural resources.

Populist revolutions occurred in three countries, Venezuela, Bolivia and Costa Rica. Venezuela's *Accion Democratica* (AD) founded in 1941 by Romulo Betancourt was the first populist group to come to power. The Gomez dictatorship was overthrown by an insurrection in 1945 and the AD came to power. When they attempted to pass an extensive agrarian reform law, the military revolted and the country was placed under the dictatorship of Gen. Perez Jimenez. A further insurrection in 1958 overthrew this despot, AD came back into power and Venezuela has not seen a dictator since. For at least twenty years the country was stable and peaceful, with a rising living standard. Since then, the AD has fallen rather spectacularly into corruption and the economic situation has deteriorated.

Bolivia's *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionaria* (MNR) was founded in 1941 by Victor Paz Estenssoro. Based in the tin miners union, the MNR won the 1951 election but was prevented from taking power by the military. The miners launched an insurrection and several sympathetic army officers gave them weapons. The revolution was successful and MNR assumed power. The tin mines were nationalized and an extensive program of agrarian reform enacted - based on the peasants themselves and not a government bureaucracy. The agrarian reform was successful, but the State-owned tin mine was a loser. The MNR stagnated, became factionalized and in 1964 was overthrown by the military. In spite of their failings, no movement before or since has done as much for the ordinary Bolivian as the MNR Revolution of 1952.

Costa Rica's 1948 election saw the populist-backed presidential candidate winning a majority. The previous government would not allow him the presidency. Civil war broke out immediately. The army, (aided by Nicaragua's dictator Somoza) the landowner/financial elite and the Communists fought against the populists but were defeated. With the popular forces in power, the army was abolished, the banks nationalized and the Communist Party banned. The various reform and populist groups came together to form the *Partido Liberacion Nacional* (PLN) and its head, Jose Figueres was elected president in 1953. The PLN then proceeded to turn Costa Rica into the most progressive and stable country in Central America and the Caribbean.

It should be noted that in the 1960's the Costa Rican PLN and the Venezuelan AD abandoned populism as an ideology and embraced social democracy by joining the Socialist (Second) International. Nevertheless, at the most important and influential period of their history, both these parties were populist.

Class opponents, and to identify them with the authoritarians of the past is to do them a deep disservice.

A similar problem exists with attitudes toward Evangelical Christians. The negative stereotype is of a Bible-pounding "fundamentalist" shouting out a hateful hellfire doctrine to an ignorant, hayseed-chewing rabble. This stereotype was formed generations ago and is long out of date. Life was short and hard in the 19th century. Fire and brimstone preaching had a cathartic effect. Industrialization led to social breakdown with the attendant evils of alcoholism, drug addiction, child abuse, prostitution and venereal disease rampant among the working population. No wonder the heavy emphasis upon the "sins of the flesh". Most people could barely read and lived in a society that was very illiterate-minded. A literal interpretation of Scripture made sense to them.

Modern Evangelicals are still concerned with sin but do not preach hatred and terror. Today's message is about "God's love" and the way of Jesus Christ as a way of liberation and empowerment. Biblical literalism is seen by most as an error and much more profound meanings are found within Scripture. Since most modern Evangelicals are well educated middle class people, such sophistication is to be expected.

Social Conservatism And Working People

The socially conservative values that the New Class likes to disparage as "bourgeois" are necessary for the worker to survive, let alone improve his position. My own life is an example of the importance of these values. We were very poor, in fact among the poorest in our town, without electricity or running water. That I ended up going to university and not to jail or a life on welfare was surely the result of my "bourgeois value-laden" upbringing. I remember well the importance attached to responsibility and to "keeping one's word", "holding up your end of things", and the encouragement to "not be a slacker". To steal and lie were the worst things you could do. The necessity of work, of education and culture were stressed, and the goal was to achieve the maximum of the latter. Having good manners and speaking grammatically correct English were highly valued. I was taught to treat everyone from a wino to the Prime Minister with respect and to refrain from the sort of actions that would make others lose respect in me. I was given a sense of self-worth.

In order to survive, to not fall into the lumpenproletariat, the working class family must stick together and show a great deal of self-discipline. The husband can't blow his paycheck on drink, drugs or whores, if he does the family will be plunged into misery and eventually break up and go on welfare. Improvidence has to be avoided. Some money must be

There is also the hypocrisy of the left. Castro jails every homosexual he can get his hands on, for the left this is an "unfortunate contradiction" of an otherwise "progressive" regime. Whereas North American conservatives are called "fascists" for opposition to gay marriage.

The social conservative position on moral and social issues is therefore less immoderate, less monolithic and irrational than the New Class would have us believe. You can hardly expect everyone to be socially conservative, but it should be obvious that the liberal left's ranting about hate, fascism, and racism has little solid content and is nothing more than a form of hysteria and hate-mongering by a group which has no real answers to today's problems. Rather than arguing with reason, they stoop to defamation, the chief means of the impotent.

The liberal left Establishment is fundamentally undemocratic in attitude, for genuine democrats, people who really believe in freedom, respect the right to have views different from theirs. Curses and insults are not an example of this respect. The New Class and its supporters have sympathy for everyone but the average person. How about a little understanding directed toward the ordinary folks who live in the small towns and suburbs who feel everything they believe in and value is being pulled down and defiled?

Social conservatism is the basic value system of the average person. It is not something that a small group of self-proclaimed guardians of public morality are trying to impose upon the majority. Much confusion and erroneous thought arises from misunderstanding this situation. We remember well those "guardians" of our youth and unfortunately tend to equate them with contemporary social conservatives. The letters to the editor decrying Elvis Presley and Rock 'n Roll as decadent, a neighbor's insults because your hair was one inch below your collar, the TV image of fat redneck sheriffs beating black people, arguing with your parents who believed that anything the government did had to be right, who could forget any of this?

Even if many people back in the '50's who talked of "traditional values" were authoritarian and bigoted, popular attitudes have changed throughout society at a very marked level. "Harper Valley PTA" was 30 years ago. We are not in that world anymore. Everyone who lived through the 1960's was changed by it and everyone who has been born since has been formed by those changes. To some critics, the universalization of informal attire, miniskirts, long hair, beards, rock 'n roll, hostility to racism, the acceptance of a larger role for women etc., are only superficial changes. But what has happened is that most of the repressive and prejudiced attitudes have been stripped away, leaving a core of "traditional values" which most people see as necessary. Today's social conservatives are as much post-Sixties people as are their New

SOCIAL CONSERVATISM

1. The Nature Of Social Conservatism

Socially conservative values are the underpinning of the populist movement. Political and economic radicalism develops in no small measure from this morality applied as a critique of existing society. But what are social conservative values? These are the so-called bourgeois values, so long derided by leftist academics. They include honesty, reliability, self-reliance, independence and the ability to co-operate with others. The community is important, as is the family, by which is meant a monogamous relationship between a man and a woman. One must also include patriotism and a deep hostility to foreign entanglements and wars. An importance is attached to religion. Basic democratic rights, such as equality, freedom of speech and of the press, are also now seen as "conservative" values, since they have been rejected by New Class political correctness fanatics.

All these values were almost universally accepted 40 years ago. Few people would have questioned any of them. And with the exception of patriotism and religion, even radical socialists would have been in accord. At one time these were the basic, fundamental values of our society and culture. The fact they are now deemed "conservative" says a lot about the changes we have gone through.

But not too much. Surveys show 90% of the population believe in God, 85% are monogamous, 98% heterosexual. The overwhelming majority are in favor of free speech, against discrimination and have a high regard for personal honesty, self-reliance etc. Social conservatism is in a general way the basic viewpoint of the average person. Where you do find a difference with the New Class and the lumpenproletariat. We only speak of social conservatism because of the immense media exposure of social nihilism. There is no culture war other than that inflicted upon the general population by the elite New Class minority.

Socially conservative values give rise to certain political demands which make the liberal-left exceedingly uncomfortable. Six of the most common of these are: 1. back-to-basics education 2. restricting immigration 3. tougher crime laws 4. opposition to quota systems for employment and education 5. opposition to abortion. 6. opposition to homosexual marriage.

These demands are what liberalism finds most difficult to swallow about social conservatism and becomes the means of discrediting populism. Anyone expounding these ideas is condemned as fascist, racist, sexist, inhumane and homophobic. The only problem is, as with the general set of soc. con. values, these demands would have

been considered common sense 35 years ago. Does this mean we were all fascists back then? Rather than loss off swear words, for that is all that "racist" and "sexist" etc., have become in the hands of the New Class propagandists, it would be far better to examine these positions with more rigour. Let's see what's behind all the furor and hyperbole.

1. On back-to-basics education. The vast majority of the population are unhappy with the education system, and the reason is, children are coming out of school ignorant and illiterate. It is fine to talk about "creativity" and no one wants to go back to the old fact-stuffing methods of the turn of the century, but to be creative, a person must have some knowledge to be creative with. One of the responses to the failure of public education has been the homeschooling movement. Much of this has a profoundly libertarian aspect. The sole group which does not acknowledge at least some of the truth of the "conservative" critique is the education bureaucracy (the Education Mafia) which stands to lose its immense power.

2. Immigration. The left-liberal Establishment considers any move to limit immigration out and out racism. The problem with this argument is the vast majority of the population are in favor of restrictions, yet only about 10% think that some races are superior to others, i.e., are racists. There must be other causes. My own personal experience is that I've rarely encountered anyone who blames immigrants for being here, it's the government that gets attacked. Immigration is just one more thing over which people feel they have no control - something done to them by the Establishment.

There are also problems of cultural clash when immigrants from cultures very different from the host country arrive. Immigrants usually reside in the inner cities and there come in contact with poor local people. The poor are the group most genuinely conservative and that conflict occurs is not at all surprising. Each wave of immigrants, from the early 19th Century on, has come in conflict with its predecessors.

Now it is NOT true that immigrants "steal our jobs", but one should be able to understand that with a chronic unemployment rate of 10% people are unhappy about the government's plans to import thousands of unskilled workers.

3. Quota systems. Multiculturalism. The Establishment brands anyone opposed to these policies as racist. Once more, as with restrictions on immigration, the overwhelming majority are opposed to what they see as social engineering. Racism might account for some of this, but the vast majority of the population? Back in the '60's my friends and I supported the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation Movements. We sought to ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION. It never entered our heads that new forms of discrimination might arise out of a self-proclaimed desire

to right the wrongs of history. Had anyone even suggested this, we would have been outraged. One can only assume that when the Establishment co-opted these movements, they deliberately designed programs to be as divisive as possible.

4. Tough on crime. The chief victims of crime are working people. The groups who feel most vulnerable to physical attack are women and the elderly. While parolees as a group commit few serious crimes, there are cases where sex crimes and murders have been committed by them. Youth crime has risen sharply. These are the background conditions for the call for stiffer sentencing. At least 70% of the population support capital punishment, but it should be noted they would be the first to cry out should an innocent person get the rope. Popular anger has resulted in the "three strikes" law in California and criminals are getting life sentences for stealing a hamburger. The population is, however, more intelligent than the law makers and distinguishes clearly between the petty offender and the serious criminal, the violent and the non-violent offense. People want the serious and violent criminals off the streets, they don't want to gulf half the population. A growing number of conservatives are for the de-criminalization of drugs, a measure which would eliminate probably half of all crime.

5. Abortion. This question creates a three-way split in the population, those for abortion on demand, those for limited access and those completely against. To find a common ground on this issue is difficult and for the liberal left to characterize the Right-To-Life movement as nazis does not help. I remember seeing a program on TV where four RTL nazis and four Pro Choice activists were placed in a room together for several days with two specialists in conciliation. While none changed their positions, all came out of the session minus stereotypes and with a discovery that they had a lot more in common than they thought. For RTL, abortion is one more aspect of a callous disregard for human life. Seemingly, most people would agree, as only a minority see abortion as a means of birth control. It should be also noted that 70% of those who claim to have an RTL position also feel that abortion is necessary in some circumstances. Conservatives are not unanimous either, for many "libertarian conservatives" are pro-choice.

6. Homosexuality. Most people today tolerate homosexuals, but to ask them to accept homosexuality is another matter. Few people want to persecute homosexuals, to go back 30 years ago when men were entrapped and arrested under the sodomy laws. No one likes the beating or murder of gays by skinhead gangs. Lack of acceptance may well be a bad thing, but it is not the sort of thing that can be forced upon people. Few people like the stereotypical gay lifestyle and most find anal sex repugnant. And when people don't like something, pushing their face into it only tends to reinforce their negative feelings.